



Region 2
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
406-542-5500

April 10, 2019

Dear Interested Citizen:

Thank you for your thoughtful reviews and comments on a proposal by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) to implement an exchange-of-use cooperative grazing system (grazing system) on the Spotted Dog Wildlife Management Area (SDWMA) and adjacent private lands in Powell County northeast of Deer Lodge, Montana. The proposed grazing system would seek to establish a balanced distribution of grazing by elk and cattle to improve grassland habitats across SDWMA and private ownership boundaries. The primary goals of the proposed action are to: 1) improve the health and productivity of native grasslands over a larger landscape by scheduling grazing treatments that are separated by long rest periods on SDWMA and adjacent lands; 2) use grazing treatments on SDWMA to enhance spring transition range for a migratory elk herd and to introduce greater structural complexity to grasslands, intended to benefit a variety of wildlife species; and 3) allow native grasslands adjacent to SDWMA that comprise critical elk-winter range to be rested on a scheduled basis, which would also benefit other game and nongame wildlife. The grazing system would be implemented on a portion (~8% or 2,800 acres) of SDWMA and would remain in effect for approximately 6 years beginning in early summer 2019.

Enclosed is a decision document in which FWP explains its rationale for recommending that the Fish & Wildlife Commission approve the proposal to use cattle grazing for managing elk habitat on a portion of Spotted Dog WMA and neighboring private lands. With the addition of public comments and FWP responses to comments in the public involvement process, FWP accepts the draft environmental assessment (EA) as final. The decision document also includes all public comments received during the public comment period on the proposed grazing system.

FWP will request approval for this proposal from the Fish & Wildlife Commission at its regularly scheduled meeting on April 25, 2019 in Helena. This meeting is open to the public, as are other regularly scheduled Commission meetings. (Earlier, this meeting had been scheduled to be held in Bozeman but has just been changed to Helena.)

Please feel free to contact me at 406-542-5500 with any questions you may have. Thank you for your interest and participation.

Sincerely,

Randy Arnold
Regional Supervisor

RA:sr